

Remarks in Oshkosh, Wisconsin  
October 15, 2004

*The President.* Thank you all. Okay. It's great to be back in Oshkosh. My only regret is I don't have time to drive by Leon's. Laura and I are thrilled to be here. We're glad to be back in Wisconsin. The enthusiasm in this State is high. With your help, with your hard work, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Wisconsin on November the 2d.

I want to—I am traveling with very good company today. So when I asked Laura to marry me, when I asked her to marry me, she said, "Okay, I will, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the deal. She's giving a lot of speeches. The American people have come to know Laura as a compassionate, warm, great First Lady.

*Audience members.* Laura! Laura! Laura!

*The President.* I know my opponent\* has been in the neighborhood recently.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He thought he was going over to Lambert Field. [*Laughter*] One of these days I'm going to make it to Lambeau Field and thank the Packers for being—setting such good examples for our kids.

I'm proud of Dick Cheney. Now, look, I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him because of his hair. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience, his ability to get the job done for the American people.

I want to thank your Congressman, Tom Petri. He's a fine man. I appreciate you coming, Congressman. I see the chairman over there, Jim Sensenbrenner. Thanks for coming, Chairman. Finally, we're proud to be here with Mark Green, Congressman Mark Green. I appreciate you guys coming.

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\* White House correction.

You need to vote for Tim Michels for the United States Senate. He wisely married Barbara. [*Laughter*] I know somebody else who made the right choice. [*Laughter*]

I really appreciate the Experimental Aircraft Association for allowing us to use this hangar. You're famous in Oshkosh, by gosh. [*Laughter*] One reason why is your airplanes. Another reason why is because of the good people who live here. I'm honored you all came out to say hello. Thanks for being here.

I want to thank Jack Voight, the State treasurer. I appreciate the speaker being here. I want to thank all the local officials.

I want to thank my friend Rick Graber. I want to thank the grassroots politics—politicians, the people who are putting up the signs and making the phone calls, the volunteers. I know many of you are working hard, and I thank you for that. It's takes a lot of hard work to get this many people out. But there's more hard work to be done. Laura and I will be campaigning alongside of you. Work hard. We will win in November.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* We're working—we're coming from the West. We were in Oregon this morning. Then we stopped off in Iowa, and fortunately, get to come to Wisconsin today. And one of the reasons we're coming west to east is, you might remember, we had a debate or two recently. I enjoyed those debates. Those debates give us a chance to express our opinions, and they show the stark differences between my opponent and me. See, we have different records, and we have different plans for the future.

My record is one of reforming education, lowering taxes, providing prescription drugs for our seniors, improving homeland protections, and waging aggressive war against

the ideologues of hate. The Senator's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream politics, out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms or results to show for it. The records are important because our country faces many challenges, and the next President must recognize the need to reform and to be able to achieve reform. On issue after issue, from jobs to health care to the need to strengthen Social Security, my opponent has failed to recognize the changing realities of today's world and the need for fundamental reforms.

You know, in the final debate, I talked about the link between jobs and education. I believe when you're talking about jobs, you need to be talking about educating the people so they can fill the jobs of the 21st century. He said during that debate, I switched away from jobs and started talking about education. Well, yes, good jobs start with good education in America.

When it comes to health care, once again, the other night, he said with a straight face that his health care plan was not a Government plan. I could barely contain myself. Twenty-two million new people would enroll on a Government program under his plan. That would be the largest increase in Government health care ever.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*Audience member.* Who pays for it?

*The President.* Yes. Eighty percent of the newly insured for his plan would be placed on a Government program like Medicaid. That's not the way to handle health care in America.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He said, well, his plan would help small businesses. Yet when you look at his plan, just like some of these analysts have done, they concluded that Senator Kerry's plan would be an over-priced albatross which would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I have a different view. Health care must be available and affordable and portable to help small businesses,

and we don't need to saddle them with a bunch of Government rules.

Finally, talking about change, we need to do something about Social Security. And yet in the debate, my opponent said if later on, after a period of time, we find that Social Security is in trouble, well, then he'll call a meeting of experts. *[Laughter]* Social Security is fine for our seniors. You might remember the 2000 campaign here in Wisconsin, when they said, "If George W. gets elected, the seniors won't get their checks." Do you remember that?

*Audience members.* Yes!

*The President.* Well, the seniors got their checks, and the seniors will continue to get their checks.

But we have trouble for our children and our grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. I think we need to think differently from the status quo. Youngsters ought to be able to take some of their own payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, an account they call their own. It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future generations and future Presidents.

The last few years, the American people have got to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I get that from my mother. *[Laughter]* They know I sometimes mangle the English language. *[Laughter]* I get that from my father. *[Laughter]* Americans also know I tell you exactly what I'm going to do, and I keep my word.

When I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months, and the economy was headed into a recession. To help families and to get this economy going again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at the fastest rate of any major industrialized nation. The homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. Incomes are up. Farm incomes are up. The past 13 months, we've added 1.9 million

new jobs. The unemployment rate across America is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in the great State of Wisconsin is 4.8 percent.

This economy is moving forward, and we have more work to do. To keep this economy strong, I'll continue to stand behind our farmers, like our dairy farmers. I signed a good farm bill. It's a farm bill that promoted conservation on our farms and ranches. It's a farm bill that recognizes that by opening up markets, our farmers can make a good living. We want to be selling Wisconsin products all around the world. I'll continue to promote good agricultural policy. I'll work with Congress to renew the milk-income-loss contract, the milk program, which is vital to Wisconsin's dairy farmers.

We'll also make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. If you want jobs here in America, it's got to be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on our job creators. We've got to do something about the junk lawsuits that are threatening the job creators in America.

To keep jobs here, we need an energy plan. The Congress needs to pass the plan I sent up there a couple of years ago. It is a plan that encourages conservation. It's a plan that encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages clean coal technology. It encourages increased domestic production in environmentally friendly ways. To keep jobs here in America, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To keep jobs here, we've got to reject economic isolationism and open up markets. We've opened up our markets for products from overseas, and it's good for you as a consumer. If you've got more to choose from in the marketplace, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. That's how the market works. That's why I'm saying to places like China, "You treat us the way

we treat you. You open up your markets." See, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

To create jobs here and to keep this economy growing, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and we've got to keep your taxes low.

Now, my opponent has his own history on the economy.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he has built the record of a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] He has voted to raise taxes 98 times.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* That's in 20 years. That's nearly five times a year. I'd call that a pattern. [Laughter] See, he can run from his record, but he cannot hide. Now he's promising not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem is, to keep that promise he'd have to break all of his other ones. [Laughter] You see, he's proposed \$2.2 trillion in new Federal spending. That's with a "T." And yet he says he's going to raise it by taxing the rich. That only raises between 600 billion and 800 billion dollars. And so you can see there's a tax gap. [Laughter] Guess who usually fills the tax gap?

*Audience members.* We do!

*The President.* Yes. Let me say one other thing about this business about taxing the rich. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to stick you with the tab. We're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Wisconsin and win a great victory.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* When I came into office, our public schools had been waiting for decades for hopeful reform. Too many of our children were being shuffled through, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability in our schools and end the soft bigotry of low expectations, and I kept

my word. The No Child Left Behind Act is working. Our children are making sustained gains in reading and math. We're closing achievement gaps all around this country. We're making progress for our families. We will leave no child behind.

There is more work to do. We'll fund early intervention programs in our high schools to help at-risk students. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their careers with a college diploma.

My opponent has a history on education issues, a history of doing almost nothing. The Senator's pledged to weaken the No Child Left Behind Act.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He's proposed diluting the accountability standards and looking at measures like teacher attendance to judge whether students are learning.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* We must have high standards. We must have strong accountability measures. We must not undermine what we have passed. We have worked to move beyond the old days of mediocrity and excuses, and we're not going to go back.

When I came into office, we had a problem with Medicare. Medicine was changing. Medicare wasn't. Take, for example this: Medicare would pay hundreds—nearly \$100,000 for a heart surgery but would not pay one dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. Think about that. It's not right for our seniors. It's certainly not right for our taxpayers. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors, and I kept my word. Seniors are already getting discounts on their medicines. Rural doctors and rural hospitals are being treated more fairly. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able

to get prescription drug coverage in Medicare.

We're moving forward on health care, and there's more to do. We need to make sure health care is affordable and available for all our people. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I'm a big believer in community health centers, where the poor and the indigent can get good primary and preventative care. We'd much rather them getting care in a community health center than an emergency room of a local hospital. We'll do more to make sure poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families.

Most of the uninsured here in America work for small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. In order to help our small businesses and help their workers and their families, small businesses ought to be able to pool together to be able to—so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big businesses are able to do. We'll expand health savings accounts so workers and small businesses are able to pay lower premiums and people can save tax-free in a health care account they call their own.

In order to make sure health care is available and affordable, we will do something about the junk lawsuits that are running up the cost to your health care. To make sure health care works, we've got to do something about the lawsuits that cause the Federal Government's tab to go up. You see, doctors practice what's called defensive medicine because of all the lawsuits. It costs our Government about \$28 billion a year. It costs our economy 60 to 100 billion dollars a year.

I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury lawyer on the ticket.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors and the patients. I am for medical liability reform—now. In

all we do to reform health care, this administration will make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

You know, there's an old saying here: No one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter] A lot of wisdom in that statement. [Laughter] When you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country. That's why I will continue to promote an ownership society in America. We want our younger workers to be able to own a piece of the Social Security system so it will be available for them when they retire. We want more people owning their own business. Every time somebody starts a small business in America, they are achieving a piece of the American Dream. We will continue to expand ownership to every corner of our country. I've told you homeownership rates are at an alltime high. We want more people opening up the door where they live, saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes, my opponent takes the side of more centralized Government. There's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Now, he dismisses that as a label. He must have seen it differently when he told a newspaper, "I'm a liberal, and I'm proud of it." [Laughter] The non-partisan National Journal did a study that named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. And that's going a long way with that bunch. [Laughter]

I have a different record and a different view and a different philosophy. I don't believe in big Government, and I don't believe in indifferent Government. I'm what you would call a compassionate conservative. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives. I don't believe in policies that try to run people's

lives. I trust the people. My opponent trusts the Government.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* We've done everything we can to help people, stand beside people, to help them have a future of dignity and independence. And that's how I'll continue to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* In this time of change, there are some things that do not change, the values we try to live by, reverence and integrity, courage and compassion. In a time of change, we all must support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is plenty clear. He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortions.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* One time on his campaign, he called himself the candidate of conservative values, but he described the Reagan years as a period of moral darkness.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We'll protect the homeland. We'll strengthen our intelligence. We'll transform our All-Volunteer Army and keep it an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We will strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will continue to spread freedom and liberty. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was some 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorists. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, because the United States of America led, Afghanistan is free and is now an ally in the war on terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; and an army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice.

We are conducting a broad strategy to keep America safe. By defending ourselves, 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq are now free. Think about that. I want our youngsters here to recognize they're watching incredible history unfold.

Take a look at Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that many young girls were not allowed to go to school. That country was run by barbarians. They were backwards. They had an ideology based upon hatred. Their mothers would be pulled into the public square and whipped, some of them killed in a sports stadium because they wouldn't toe the line of their ideology. It was a dim and dark society. But because

we acted in our self-interest, we freed the people of Afghanistan. And they had Presidential elections. Thousands of people came out to vote. The first voter in the Presidential elections in Afghanistan was a 19-year-old woman. Think about that. Freedom is on the march, and the world is better for it.

In Iraq, elections are scheduled for January. Think about how far that society has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. See, it's in our interests. It's in our security interests that we stand with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them. And that will help us keep the peace.

So the mission is clear. We will help these countries train armies and police and security forces, so the people of Afghanistan and Iraq can do the hard work of defending their freedom and democracy. We will help them get on the path to stability and self-government as quickly as possible, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of a great military. And it is a great military because of the character and the decency of those who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank the veterans who are here tonight for having set such a good example for those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who are here for having made such great sacrifices for our freedom.

We will continue to make sure that our military has all the resources they need to complete their missions. That is why I went to the United States Congress and asked for \$87 billion of supplemental funding to support our troops in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a really important request, and it received great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the funding

request, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* And when you're out there gathering up the vote, remind people of this fact: Only 4 Members of the United States Senate—only 4 out of 100—voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding the troops sent into harm's way, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* So they asked him, how could he have made that vote? And perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign—[laughter]—he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it."

*Audience members.* —before I voted against it! [Laughter]

*The President.* Now, he's given a lot of answers since then. One of the most interesting ones is when he said, "Well, the whole thing was just a complicated matter." [Laughter] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We have a difference of opinion when it comes to making this country secure. And in one of our debates, Senator Kerry proposed that this Nation should pass a "global test" before we send our troops.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* You know, the problem with his "global test" is that he could never pass it. [Laughter] In 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries throughout the world joined our coalition. Yet even after United Nations approval, in the United States Senate, Senator Kerry voted against the authorization of the use of force.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Think about that, and think about what he said in one of the debates when he said it was a "mistake" to remove Saddam Hussein. He said he

would have tried it differently. He would have had another United Nations Security Council resolution. That's exactly what Saddam Hussein would have wanted. The truth of the matter is, Saddam would still be in power in Baghdad if Senator Kerry had his way, and he would have been in Kuwait.

*Audience members.* Yes!

*The President.* And the world would be worse off. The world is better off with Saddam sitting in a prison cell.

Listen, I'll continue to build strong alliances during the next 4 years. Today, when I was flying in from out west, I had a good visit with Tony Blair, our strong ally. Alliances are important. Coalitions are important. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I'll tell you what I mean by that. I'll use an example. Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan is my friend. He's Laura's friend as well. That probably doesn't seem unusual to some, but think about this. It wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that we were at war with Japan. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. They attacked us. My dad fought against the Japanese. I'm confident people's relatives out here went to World War II against the Japanese.

And after we won that war, President Harry S. Truman believed in the transformational power of liberty to convert an enemy into an ally. And so they worked to build a democracy in Japan. And there were a lot of skeptics in America then. You can imagine why. Japan was the enemy. How could an enemy possibly become a democracy? Why do we want to work with somebody who killed our sons—great skepticism.

But fortunately, he believed in the power of liberty to transform. And as a result of

that belief, I sit down at the table today with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, talking about the peace we all want, talking about how we can work together to confront the problems of the world so our children can live in a more peaceful world.

We will succeed in Iraq, and someday, an American President will sit down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, and they'll be talking about the peace in the Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe that millions plead in silence for their freedom in the Middle East. I believe women want to live in a free society. I believe the moms in the Middle East want their children to grow up in a free world. I believe that if given a chance, the people of the Middle East will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man: democracy. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith that makes us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. There were workers in hard-hats there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console a fellow. He looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

When I traveled your great State 4 years ago, I made a pledge that if I had a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:58 p.m. at the Experimental Aircraft Association, Exhibit Hangar B. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Michels, senatorial candidate in Wisconsin, and his wife, Barbara; Wisconsin State Treasurer Jack C. Voight; John Gard, speaker, Wisconsin State Assembly; Richard W. Graber, chairman, Republican Party of Wisconsin; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

## Message on the Observance of Ramadan *October 15, 2004*

I send warm greetings to Muslims in the United States and around the world as they begin observance of Ramadan, the holiest season in their faith.

Ramadan commemorates the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammed. By teaching the importance of compassion, justice, mercy, and peace, the Qur'an has guided many millions of believers across the cen-

turies. Today, this holy time is still set aside for Muslims to remember their dependence on God through fasting and prayer, and to show charity to those in need.

American history has taught us to welcome the contributions of men and women of all faiths, for we share the fundamental values of religious freedom, love of family,